

## Negro Universities Caught Off Base By Business Demand for Graduates

By Susanna McBee  
Staff Reporter

The Nation's Negro colleges have found themselves in the midst of a job recruitment explosion so great that some of them were not prepared for it.

Last year, more than any past year, leading business and industrial firms and Federal Government agencies trekked to Negro colleges seeking to hire qualified graduates.

A Negro college graduate trained in science, engineering, mathematics, or business management was more likely to have several job offers—just as white college graduates had.

But Negro graduates in the humanities and social sciences were still apt to have more trouble finding a job than their white counterparts.

Many of the job offers going to Negro college graduates carried starting salaries of \$6500 to \$7000 a year, and some scientific positions start at \$8500.

As one Negro college president remarked with some irony, "I had a Ph.D. for 10 years before I could command the salary that many of these kids are starting out with."

The firms that are seeking Negro graduates include many in the Plans for Progress program of the President's Committee for Equal Employment Opportunities—those that have signed pledges to hire and promote without discrimination.

One side effect of the intensified recruitment was that some Negro colleges had to expand their job placement staffs and facilities. A few had to open such offices on a full-time basis last year. Business representatives were turned away at some colleges that were not equipped to handle the volume of on-campus job interviews sought.

Marian V. Coombs, who directs the job placement office at Howard University,

said that during the last year 319 companies and Government agencies held job interviews on campus. "There were about 400 requests for recruitment visits, but we didn't have the time, space, or staff to accommodate all of the company representatives," she said.

"All this is an explosion for which we were not prepared," Mrs. Coombs added. "Michigan State University has 30 interview rooms, but we don't have any as such."

Mrs. Coombs said much of the increased recruitment resulted from the civil rights movement, specifically from the work of the President's Committee.

"But it was not all due to that," she said. "Some of it was due to economic insight. Companies are recognizing that it is to their own economic interests to hire Negroes. They are seeing that Negroes are qualified for good white collar jobs and that the Negro community has great economic power."

Mrs. Coombs said, however, that "it is still perfectly evident that the young Negro does not have the outlet for the low-level white collar job that white students do. A firm may hire one girl for a clerical job, but what does that mean when you have 50 that need such work?"

Among the firms recruiting, positions being offered, and starting salaries for Howard students listed by Mrs. Coombs are Johns Hopkins University's Applied Physics Laboratory, electrical engineer, \$7600; the Martin Co., mechanical engineer, \$7400; Mason and Hanger, Silas Co. of Arlington, Iowa, mechanical engineer, \$8056, and Proctor and Gamble, electrical engineer, \$7500.

Other firms recruiting at Howard include Western Electric, American Telephone and Telegraph, Woodward & Lothrop, American Oil Co., Allied Chemical Corp., Alcoa Aluminum, and Allis Chalmers.

President Charles H. Wesley of Central State College in Wilberforce, Ohio, said about 50 firms recruited last year at his school, which is three-fourths Negro.

"It got to the point where it was taking too much of our students' time, and we had to call a halt to the recruiting," he said. "We had to turn down requests for campus visits by 30 to 40 firms."

"Many of our graduates had three or four offers. It's quite a change from the old days when we had to knock on the doors of employers trying to get jobs for our graduates."

Wesley said graduates going into technical jobs get \$6500 to \$7400 starting pay, business students get about \$6000, and teachers, \$5100 to \$5400.

President Stephen J. Wright of Fisk University in Nashville said business and industry as well as Federal agencies have stepped up their recruitment at Fisk. In the 1962-1963 academic year, 11 firms and 16 Federal agencies visited the campus. During the last year 58 firms and 25 agencies made visits, he said.

Among the firms recruiting at Fisk were Time-Life Inc., IBM, Eastman Kodak, Smith Kline and French, Ford, Westinghouse Electric, Socoy Mobil, TWA, American Cynamid, and Celanese.

At Morehouse College for Negro men in Atlanta, two people worked full time on job placement for the first time last year. Placement Director William M. Nix said 50 companies and 36 school districts sought graduates. The highest paying job offer was made by the Honeywell Corp. of Minneapolis, which hired a Negro physicist for \$6500 a year. Other firms offering good salaries were Whirlpool Inc. and Upjohn Co.

Nix said no jobs were offered at a salary below \$4500. "I made six trips to the campus and found that many companies are now looking for Negro graduates. Now is the time for the few Negroes who cracked the color line a few years ago were good ambassadors for the race—they were educated, dignified, and competent," Nix said.

"Three years ago two representatives of a big firm in the North came to our campus just to look it over—not to recruit. After a while, I took them to see Atlanta's Negro community."

"They were very impressed after visiting one of the homes. They said, 'We don't have Negroes of this kind in our home town.'"

"And I said, 'yes, you do.' And they discovered that they did."

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January 1963

# More Job Recruiters Invade Campuses of Negro Colleges

By Walter Duka  
Staff Reporter

Recruiters for commerce, industry and Government are invading campuses of the Nation's Negro colleges and universities in sharply increased numbers.

The trend has created new hope for a largely untapped resource, the Negro college graduate, and has inaugurated a period of renewed self-appraisal and improvement for Negro institutions.

Some 50 leaders from 21 of these institutions met at Howard University Thursday for a two-day Department of Labor conference. Out of their discussions emerged an optimism tinged with memories of "Negroes need not apply" job advertisements.

The educators' hopes were bolstered by hearing that Howard University received four times as many recruiters in 1961-62 as in the previous year; that Morgan State College in Baltimore has had a five-fold increase in industrial recruitment over the last two years; that an "enormous increase" has taken place at Fisk University in Nashville.

Then their views were set in perspective by statements

of such speakers as Marion Coombs, placement director at Howard. Mrs. Coombs noted that while Howard had 200 recruitment visits last year, "some smaller white colleges receive as many as 1500 visits."

Mrs. Coombs and others said the present trend began in 1961.

"I believe it started with the emphasis that was placed that year on equal employment opportunities," she said. "That led to the discovery of Negro institutions as a manpower source."

President Kennedy issued an Executive Order in March of 1961 requiring holders of Government contracts to hire on the basis of ability alone. He also launched a campaign to attract talented Negroes into Government.

J. Percy Bond, director of admissions and placements at Morgan State College, suggested that many companies may be recruiting on Negro campuses only to give evidence of compliance with the President's order.

"Many recruiters say they're sorry that their company policy is to hire only a limited number of graduates who do

not have advanced degrees," he said.

"I will not suggest what this may mean," he said. "But 'tokenism' is what we need least of all."

Despite this, however, virtually every educator said the trend has provided encouragement for his students, many of whom had previously despaired of education with only limited job horizons facing them.

They agreed also that the graduates most in demand were those trained in science or technology. But the recruiters also seek students specializing in accounting, business administration, teaching and social work, they said.

The new recruiting trend was not born without its share of labor pains, Mrs. Coombs indicated.

"When Lockheed first visited us with three recruiters in 1961," she said, "one of the recruiters was more uneasy than any of the students who were interviewed."

Yet the visit ended happily, with Lockheed hiring 10 graduates that year at salaries ranging from \$6200 to \$8700, she said. This year, Mrs. Coombs expects Lockheed to hire some 20 students.

Many Government speakers at the Howard conference cited gains in Negro employment and promotion in Federal jobs. One speaker, however, pointed out that, while Government is anxious to hire Negroes, efforts must also be made to improve their education at some institutions.

The speaker, Don Frye, of the Housing and Home Finance Agency, said that at one college 15 senior girls majoring in commercial courses failed a Government secretarial test "that many girls pass in high school."

The educators agreed there was a need to raise academic standards. Jerome Hampton, president of Hampton Institute, Hampton, Va., was applauded after he declared:

"We must return to our campuses in a mood of urgency and raise the standards of our programs."

To assist the stepped-up recruitment programs, the educators vowed also to increase the efficiency of placement offices at their institutions.

"We have made inspiring gains," Mrs. Coombs said. "But tremendous barriers remain."